



Budget may affect work on roads

11:31 PM PST on Tuesday, January 20, 2004

By BRADLEY WEAVER / The Press-Enterprise

The state budget crisis may derail \$4.3 billion in transportation funding to Southern California over the next six years, paralyzing roadwork and potentially damaging the region's economy, analysts warned Tuesday.

Gov. Schwarzenegger's \$99 billion budget plan guts state transportation spending for the coming fiscal year by diverting \$1.1 billion in gas taxes to state coffers. But a regional agency monitoring the situation expects deeper cuts.

The Southern California Association of Governments, the regional planning agency for six counties, said fewer state dollars for road projects would result in reduced federal funds for those jobs.

The group's spokesman, Jeff Lustgarten, said Tuesday that because transportation projects are funded from multiple sources, the \$4.3 billion prediction could reach \$12 billion if federal funds are withheld.

"You talk to anyone out there and they haven't seen this magnitude of funding reductions in a long time," Lustgarten said.

The loss of state revenue could delay several Inland area projects, including the addition of a carpool lane to Highway 91 in Riverside and the 60-91-215 freeway interchange. Also threatened is a new interchange for Palm Drive and Interstate 10 in Palm Springs, according to the Riverside County Transportation Commission.

The cuts to transportation would result in 60,000 fewer jobs across Southern California, according to SCAG.

Lustgarten said federal dollars, which account for about one-fourth of the region's transportation spending, are only given to projects that meet air-quality laws. He said those regulations may not be met unless emissions are reduced by the same transportation projects facing the budget ax.

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